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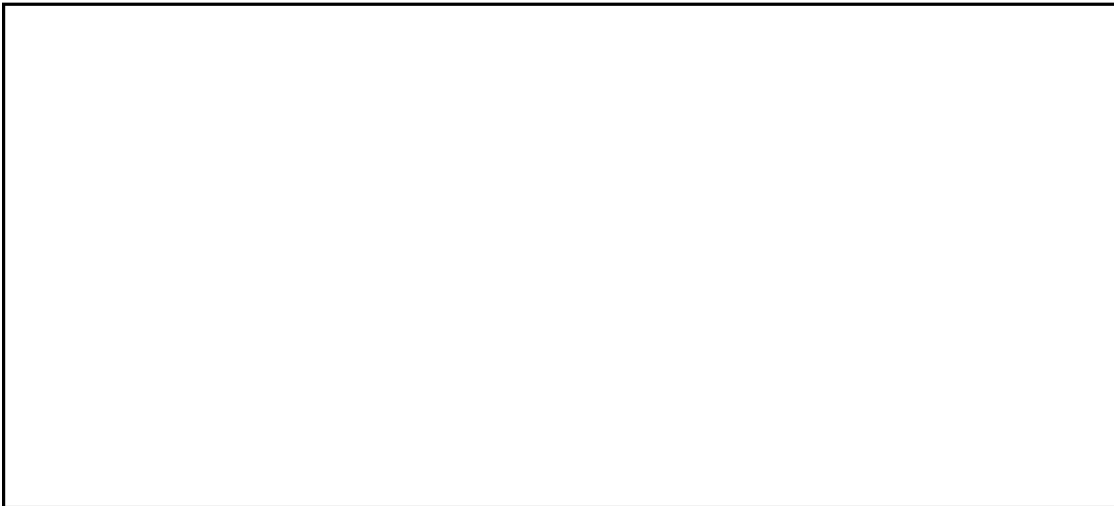
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LEBANON

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The Syrian mediating team in Lebanon apparently returned to Damascus on Thursday; an embassy source said that colonels Khuli and Madani briefed the Higher Syrian Military Committee last night on their experiences in Lebanon, and the committee then debated courses of action. The committee reportedly is composed of both military and political leaders, and probably is a newly created task force charged with following events in Lebanon.

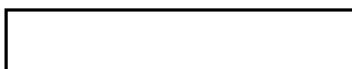


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Jumblatt has told US officials in Beirut that he is now willing to accept President Franjiah's resignation under the Syrian formula of a constitutional amendment providing for the immediate election of a new president. Jumblatt's only qualification is that Franjiah step down within "a few days" after the election. The leftist leader's acceptance of this formula could provide the basis for renewed negotiations on a cease-fire agreement.



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Phalanges leader Pierre Jumayyil and Interior Minister Shamun—who together hold the key to the Christians' next move—apparently are coordinating closely on their military tactics, but neither seems sure what to do next. Jumayyil yesterday issued a statement labeling partition the "most abhorrent" solution to the crisis. He expressed some hope that Syrian mediation might still succeed, but raised the possibility of putting the Christian case before the UN or the Arab League.

The Military Situation

Heavy fighting continued yesterday in Beirut and in the mountainous district east of the city, although neither Muslim nor Christian forces appeared to be making appreciable gains. The Phalangists reportedly repulsed several attacks against the major Christian district in east Beirut, and Christian forces apparently are surrounding several villages in the mountain area where Kamal Jumblatt's forces are operating. The US defense attache in Beirut calls the situation generally static.

The Christians apparently have recovered from their initial disarray following Franjiyah's flight from the presidential palace to Juniyah, and unconfirmed reports state that several thousand Christian volunteers have joined the Phalangist ranks. Despite this, the Christians probably will be able to do little more than stabilize their defensive positions.

As of early Friday morning, the US defense attache in Syria had reported no unusual military activity along the Damascus-Beirut road. He had not yet been able to check out a report of unusual military activity in the area of Syria's 1st Armored Division just south of Damascus.

After conversations with various Syrian army commanders Thursday night, the attache concluded that the Syrians are now in a readiness posture that would enable them to move forces into Lebanon within a few hours, should Asad take the political decision to do so.

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ARGENTINA

The military government in Argentina is extending and consolidating its control.

The junta has named army Commander Videla as President. A committee of senior officers will advise the President on legislative matters. Officers now occupy the top jobs in all 22 provinces and some local jurisdictions, as well as all federal executive posts. The intended duration of military rule is not clear. An official communique only specified that junta members will not represent their services for more than three years.

A ban on all political activity remains in effect, but only a handful of left-wing splinter parties have actually been disbanded. The Moscow-oriented Communist Party survives. The junta has taken over the administration of the General Confederation of Workers, the principal labor organization, and banned its political affiliate, the so-called 62 Organizations.

The junta has not yet publicly addressed its most pressing problem—the economy. It has said, however, that civilians will be appointed to cabinet posts requiring “unique specialties,” and the Economy Ministry is almost certainly among them. A civilian economist would provide the expertise the military acknowledges it lacks and would act as a lightning rod for criticism of future policies. Jose Martinez de Hoz, an economist and former government official, is the most likely candidate.

Apparently encouraged by the lack of public resistance thus far, the junta is relaxing some of the more obvious controls. The US embassy reports, for example, that roadblocks are now down, airports are operating normally, and censorship of the press has been lifted. The greatest potential for opposition lies with the terrorists, who so far have remained relatively inactive. Labor can also be expected to protest when, as seems likely, the government announces further economic austerity measures.

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CUBA

The Castro government has been increasing its foreign economic assistance programs to developing countries. Initiated in the mid-1960s, these programs are an important part of Cuba's effort to increase Cuban political influence in the third world.

Havana has more than 2,000 civilians in at least 15 countries throughout Africa, the Middle and Far East, and the Caribbean. Although the number in any one country fluctuates from one year to the next, the total is considerably above the levels of the mid-1960s.

About two thirds are located in Africa: chiefly Tanzania, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Somalia, Angola, Guinea Bissau, and Zambia. In addition, several hundred civilians are operating in Vietnam, and a 280-man construction brigade is being sent to Jamaica, Havana's first major aid effort in the Caribbean area.

The Cubans are engaged primarily in building rural roads and water systems and in social development programs. Specific projects include providing agricultural advisers for the sugar industry and medical technicians and teachers for public health and education programs—all areas in which the Cubans have expertise.



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PANAMA

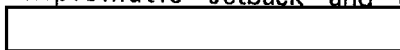
Opposition to Cuban intervention in Africa is threatening Panama's planned summit meeting of Latin American leaders in June. A number of Latin American leaders have already indicated they will boycott the meeting if Cuban Prime Minister Castro attends.

Panama had hoped the meeting would promote endorsements of Panama's position in the Canal treaty negotiations, as well as enhance General Torrijos' prestige as a Latin American leader.

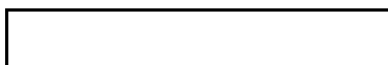


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Torrijos recently met with the presidents of Venezuela and Costa Rica in order to resolve the dilemma. A failure to salvage the conference would be a major diplomatic setback and embarrassment for Torrijos.



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NATO-AFRICA

The NATO allies share a growing concern over the Soviet role in southern Africa, but are unable to agree on measures to contain Soviet influence there.

At Alliance consultations this week, the Dutch described the dilemma facing the West as one of how to go about supporting decolonization while blocking the extension of Soviet influence in Africa.

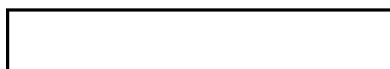
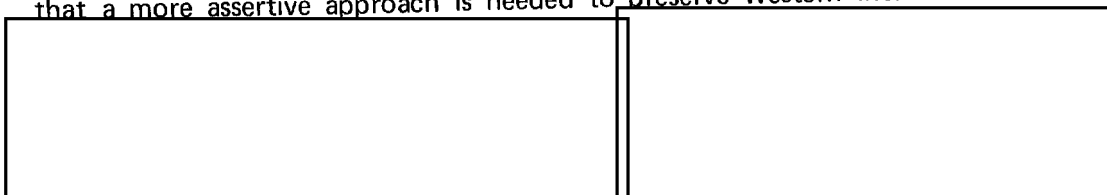
The allies agreed that an outbreak of hostilities between the black African nations and the white-ruled states would increase African dependence on the Soviets and appear to put the West on the side of white rule. In the near term, the West should press the Rhodesians and South Africans to be more responsive to black African demands.

The West Germans and some other allies argue that, once tensions have eased, the attraction of Western aid and the strength of African ties to Europe will lead to a restoration of friendly ties with Angola and Mozambique. Nationalist sentiment would remain an important factor and would also help put an end to Soviet intervention. The West Germans admit that a continued Cuban presence might have to be tolerated, but agree that it would be less ominous than a Soviet presence.

In the Dutch view, the Cuban troops must be withdrawn; this can only be achieved by the US exerting pressure on the Soviets. The Dutch acknowledge that this entails a judgment about the importance of Africa that the US might not be prepared to support. The Dutch believe, however, that the Soviet actions pose a clear threat to detente.

The Dutch position may in fact reflect widespread skepticism that the white minorities in Rhodesia and South Africa can be induced to give up their rule voluntarily and that economic aid and traditional Western ties will be enough to establish friendly relations with Angola and Mozambique. More visible evidence of Western support would thus be a minimum condition for expecting the Africans themselves to be willing or able to expel the Cubans and the Soviets.

The French, who have been the most prominent West European supporters of a "low-profile" approach, appear to be reassessing their policy and now may agree that a more assertive approach is needed to preserve Western interests in Africa.



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The Portuguese also support practical steps to demonstrate Western firmness. At the NATO meeting, they suggested that the West make it clear that it has drawn a line beyond which the Soviet-backed forces would not be permitted to go without encountering Western resistance.

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